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India: Dim Prospects for the Communists

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A Research Paper

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NESA 82-10509
September 1982

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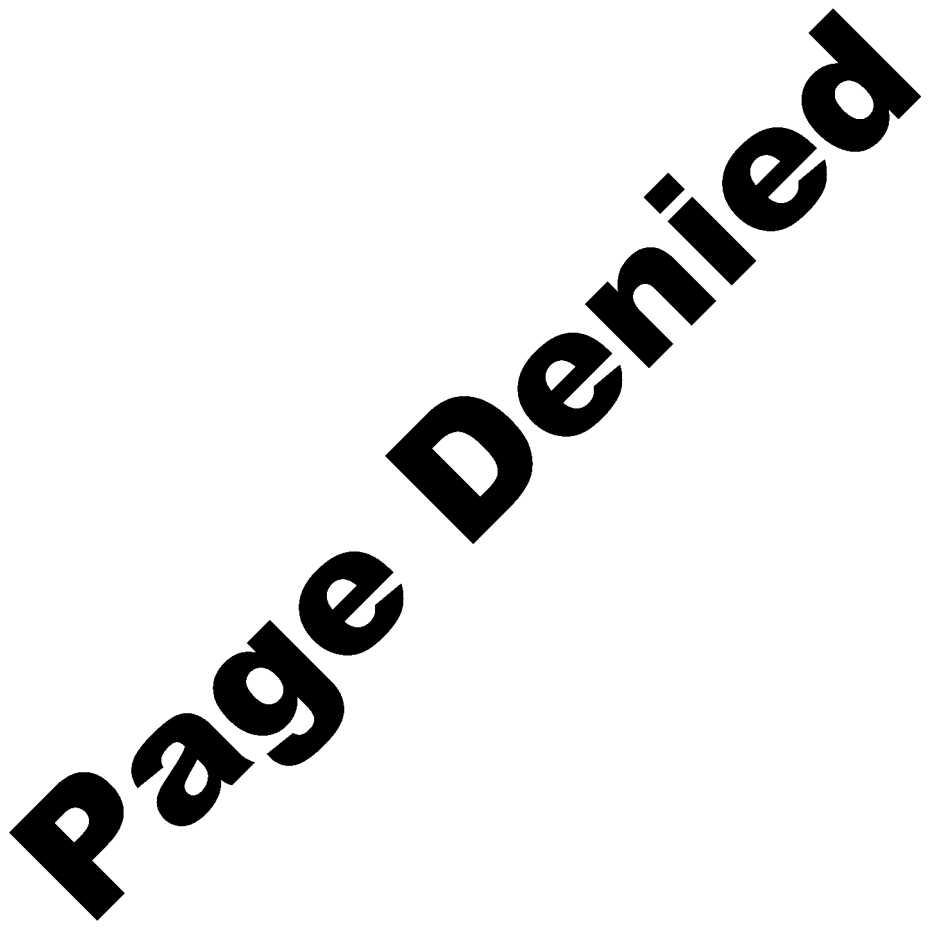

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India: Dim Prospects for the Communists

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A Research Paper

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This paper was prepared by the Office of Near East–South Asia Analysis. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations and the National Intelligence Council. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, South Asia Division, NESA,

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India: Dim Prospects for the Communists

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Overview

Information available as of 6 August 1982 was used in this report.

India's Communists are not a revolutionary threat, nor do they pose a serious challenge to US interests. They have traded their class struggle philosophy for a share of parliamentary power and have gradually become integrated into the nation's system of parliamentary democracy. India's religious, cultural, and social institutions resist revolutionary change, forcing Communist leaders to concentrate on electoral politics.

Although the Communists over the past 30 years have won elections to several state governments, we believe that the pro-Soviet Communist Party of India (CPI) and the more independent Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) have little chance of making significant gains at the expense of Prime Minister Gandhi's ruling Congress Party within the next few years. Their long-term prospects for eventually leading a national government are almost as remote. A divisive tradition among the Indian Communists has fragmented the movement, created morale problems, and yielded two major parties and a host of factions whose leaders have a vested interest in maintaining their separate identity. The Communist parties have active grass-roots organizations in a number of states but have been unable to broaden their popular appeal. An aging Communist leadership has taken both the CPI and CPM in directions that many rank-and-file members at the regional level oppose.

Prime Minister Gandhi harbors a deep distrust of Communists because they publicly criticize most of her domestic policies and have illegal ties to the Soviet Union. She sees the Communist parties' relationship with Moscow as subversive and as a heavyhanded attempt by the Kremlin to influence Indian Government policy. Our assessment is that Gandhi views a Soviet-encouraged reconciliation of the Communist parties as a possible challenge to the succession of her son and political heir, Rajiv. Although she maintains a dialogue with the Communist parties, Gandhi strongly resents their increased opposition to her.

India's Communist parties continue to support the general foreign policy goals of the Soviet Union in return for Moscow's patronage. The Soviets encourage the growing cooperation between the CPI and CPM because a unified Indian Communist party under Soviet influence could exert

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pressure on the Prime Minister to adopt more socialistic domestic and pro-Soviet foreign policies. Such a party would also be better placed to make a long-shot bid for national power in coalition with non-Communist opposition parties once Gandhi leaves office. The Communist parties have apparently agreed at Moscow's urging to moderate criticism of Gandhi, build up organizational strength, and continue to court the millions of voters whose future political loyalties are still undetermined.

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India: Dim Prospects for the Communists

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Pattern of Communist Support

The Indian Communists have achieved only limited local success in converting to their political advantage the unrest caused by growing political consciousness and accelerating economic and social change. The Communists have attracted the support of somewhat less than 10 percent of the electorate over the past 20 years, and they have had difficulty in maintaining this small base of support and remain split into two major and several minor parties.

Since the early 1960s the Communists' share of the total national popular vote has declined slightly (see table). Their reduced proportion of the vote from 1962 to 1980 would have been more pronounced had it not been for significant gains by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) in its strongholds of West Bengal and Kerala. The two primary Communist parties, the CPM and the Communist Party of India (CPI), currently hold only 48 of the 526 seats in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament. (The appendix provides background information on the Communist movement in India.)

Communist Representation in Lok Sabha Elections, 1952-80 [a]

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	Seats Won	Popular Vote (*Percent*)
1952	16	3.3
1962	29	9.9
1971	48	9.8
1980	47	8.9

[a] Includes CPI and CPM combined representation and popular vote in 1971 and 1980. In parliamentary byelections since 1980, the Communists have had a net gain of one seat in the Lok Sabha.

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The US Embassy's estimate that the CPI has about 470,000 card-carrying members while the smaller but more influential CPM has about 270,000 is roughly consistent with the Communist parties' own membership claims. CPI membership is widespread but thin throughout the country. More than 60 percent of the CPM membership is concentrated in West Bengal and Kerala. The remaining 19 million or so Communist supporters participate in a variety of labor unions, front organizations, and various peripheral groups.

Election statistics show that the Communists are strong in the legislative assemblies of only three of India's 22 states, all outside the critical Hindi-speaking heartland. In 1980 the CPM fell just short of an outright majority in Tripura, and in 1977 it polled slightly less than 40 percent of the vote in West Bengal and about 30 percent in Kerala. The Communists garnered 10 percent of the vote in only three other states and about 5 percent in two additional states.

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Prominent scholars of Indian Communism contend that Communist strength in these states results from the governing elite's belief that the Congress Party cannot serve their specific regional interests. The CPM has exploited the Congress Party's weak organization and has become the champion of states rights in West Bengal, Tripura, and Kerala.

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Although the US Embassy estimates the Communists have a larger number of labor union members than any other party, the CPI in particular has gradually been losing urban working-class support in regions necessary for gaining national strength. In relatively industrialized western India CPI support has dwindled over the past decade, according to Embassy reporting. Independent labor unions in contrast are

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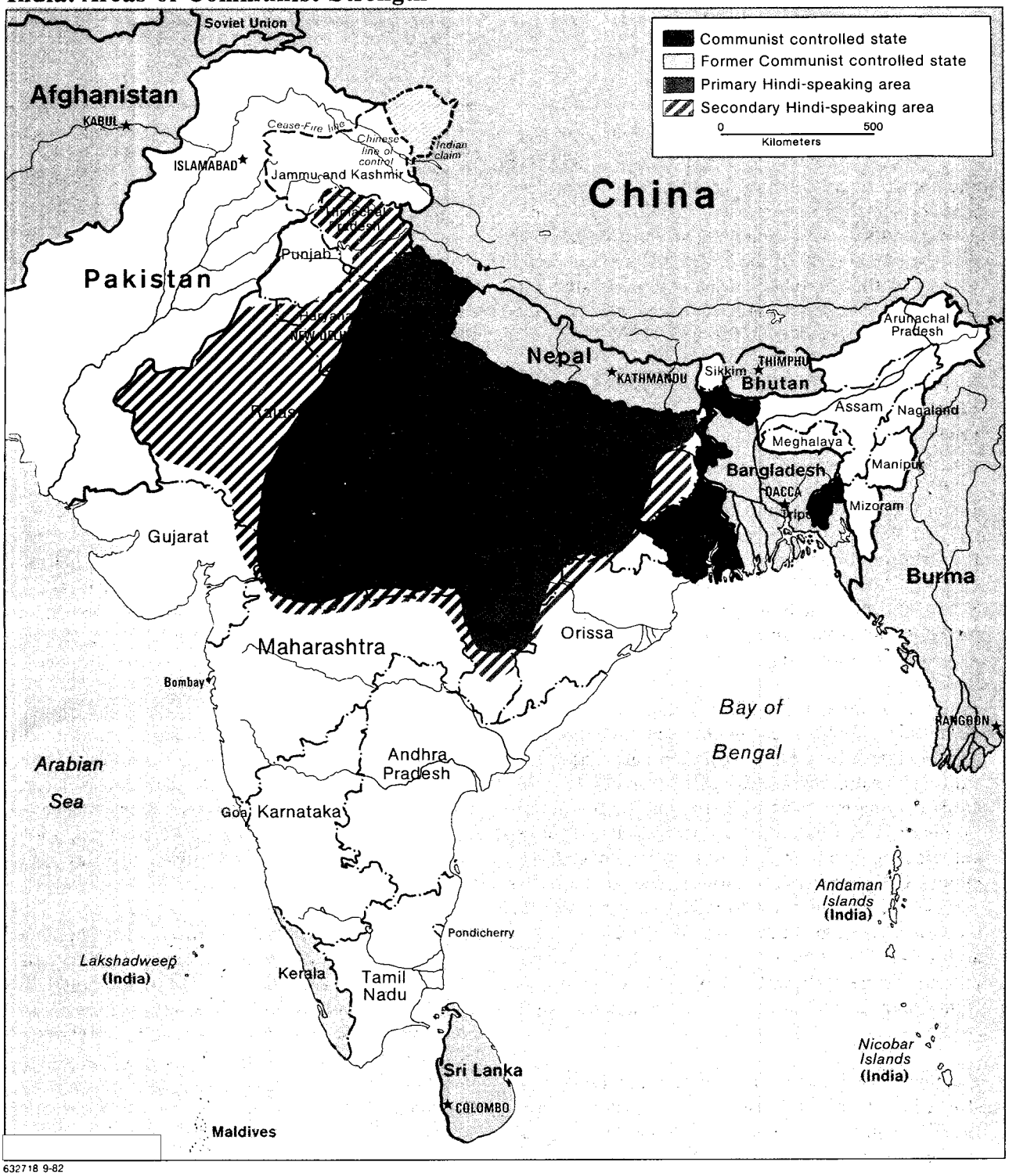
India: Areas of Communist Strength



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Election studies have shown that the Communists attract the highest percentage of their vote from the "working classes," but most Communist leaders are well educated, high caste, and middle class.

attracting more politically active members than the Communist-affiliated unions, and the CPI and CPM now rank only third and fourth, respectively in labor union membership in the highly industrialized Bombay metropolitan area.

Communist Problems

Indian social and cultural institutions and Hindu religious traditions are formidable barriers to revolutionary Marxism. It appears to us that the predominance of caste, the prevalence of traditional, regional politics based on language and culture, and the public's habitual rejection of radical change have limited the Communist parties' national appeal and left them with no alternative but to participate in parliamentary politics.

In instances where radical Maoist factions of the Communist parties have adopted violent tactics—often against ruling Communist state governments—the two major Marxist parties have lost public support. Pockets of violence against landlords and shopkeepers in the northern West Bengal countryside prompted antigovernment protests and led the Marxist government there to launch police campaigns against the responsible Communist extremists. The Congress Party's surprising success in Calcutta against CPM candidates in the 1982 state assembly elections was a public reaction against Marxist gangs who—ignoring government orders—resorted to frequent assaults on political opposition groups, according to Indian journalists. We believe that the fall of the CPM government in Kerala in October 1981 resulted largely from the electorate's perception of excessive violence between Communist and rightwing extremist groups. 25X1

The dominant caste system implicitly sanctions social discrimination, enforces social oppression in rural 25X1
areas, and condones economic exploitation. The system consigns each Hindu at birth to an immutable 25X1
dharma (duty) which encourages unquestioning acceptance of his existing environment and resistance to change. In addition, India's 80 million Muslims have long opposed the "godless" Communist parties.

For a small share of political power the Communists have abandoned their former goal of sabotaging the constitution from within. Although Communists still talk about future revolution in vague terms, they now openly defend the political system and have been 25X1
absorbed into it. Communist platforms on land reform, a self-reliant economy, a vigorous public sector, secularism, maintenance of national security, and parliamentary democracy do not substantially differ from programs espoused by the ruling Congress Party. By projecting themselves as simply left-leaning parties, the Indian Communists have lost their dis- 25X1
tinctive revolutionary character. Indian journalists note repeatedly that the ruling CPM in West Bengal has even been accused by the political opposition and elements of its own disgruntled cadre of cultivating the Calcutta business and industrial establishment.

Communist participation in the conventional parlia- 25X1
mentary system of government has reduced the revolutionary consciousness of its followers. According to Indian press observers who report on the Communist parties, such participation has created discontent among the rank and file and has caused many proponents of radical political change to leave the CPI and CPM. In states where Communists have held power, Marxist trade unions have been tightly controlled and have lost stature as militant organizations. In our judgment, the CPI and CPM have consistently reined in extremists in their affiliated front organizations in order to avoid attacks on the social and economic order of which the Communists have become a part.

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The need to cater to traditional Indian values at the polls and the tendency to conform to parliamentary politics make it difficult for the Communists to achieve an identity apart from the Congress Party. By condemning extremist politics, the Communist parties have problems drawing sharp distinctions between their programs and those of the "bourgeois" Congress Party and have had trouble attracting a loyal constituency apart from Communist front organizations.

Leadership. Differences over tactics and philosophy between an aging and isolated national leadership and the Communist state leaders who have actually exercised political power clearly weaken the Communists as a national alternative to the Congress Party. We believe that the aging leadership has created a troublesome generation gap in the Communist parties. The top Communist party leaders are all in their late sixties or seventies—CPI General Secretary Rao and West Bengal CPM Chief Minister Basu are 68, and CPM General Secretary Namboodiripad is 73. In reply to a reporter's comment at the CPM congress in January 1982 that gray hair seemed to dominate the convention, a senior official admitted that the average age of Politburo members was 70 and that of the Central Committee, 65. The press noted that nearly 35 percent of the delegates to the CPI congress in March 1982 joined the party before India achieved independence in 1947. Moreover, Indian journalists note that party cadres have increasingly accused the leadership of being isolated and of developing a bourgeois attitude that endangers the revolutionary identity of the Communist parties.

In our judgment, the inadequate infusion of new people and ideas to the policymaking apparatus is a persistent weakness in the Communist movement even though the leadership publicly professes sensitivity to the problem. Only a handful of cadres has been promoted from district to state committees and fewer still from state to central committees. Instead of promoting cadres to higher level positions, leaders tend to retain organizational power. At both CPM and CPI congresses this year few younger members were inducted into decisionmaking committees of the parties. According to press accounts, some disillusioned and impatient young cadres are beginning to seek new outlets for their energies outside the confines of the Communist parties and have already left the CPI and CPM. 25X1

Disunity. Intraparty differences within the CPI and CPM diminish the effectiveness of opposition to Gandhi and impede efforts by the collective Communist leadership to present a united left alternative to the national electorate. Squabbles in the CPI have recently resulted in a split in party ranks and raise the possibility of further fissures. In our view, fundamental doctrinal and tactical differences in the CPM hinder the leadership's efforts to project a national image. 25X1 25X1

Disunity within the CPI is a major weakness that Prime Minister Gandhi has sought to exploit. In 1981 the leadership expelled former leader S. A. Dange because he objected to the party's opposition to Gandhi and reconciliation with the CPM. With public encouragement from Gandhi, Dange subsequently took a small following from the CPI and formed a new party, the All-India Communist Party (AICP). Gandhi probably hoped that she could reduce Soviet support of the CPI and thereby weaken it by—in effect—making the more friendly AICP the "sanctioned" Communist party of India. Indian journalists believe that a significant number of Dange's sympathizers who remain in the CPI still may eventually leave the party. 25X1

The CPM also has much potentially serious internal dissent, in our judgment. The chief unresolved problem is whether or not party policy should be formulated by the national leadership and implemented by state units. 25X1 25X1 25X1

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Revitalization Efforts

Coalition Strategy. Communist leaders appear to be increasingly preoccupied with strengthening their parties in preparation for the post-Gandhi era. As stated by Communist party leaders in the press and in official policy documents, the CPM and CPI have made cooperation with non-Communist parties a top priority. The CPM leadership in particular has decided in the past two party congresses that electoral success in the Hindi-speaking belt—Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Haryana—is critical to its efforts to build a party with a national constituency. Our analysis is that the series of local electoral alliances made by the CPM with non-Communist parties is intended to shortcut the time-consuming, district-by-district recruitment of cadre. This new electoral strategy, which has evolved in selected district and municipal contests over the past two years, has not yet led to notable Communist successes in the Hindi-speaking north. Communist leaders publicly maintain that this experiment needs more time, but, according to the Indian press, a large number of the rank and file reportedly argue that the Communists must revert to painstaking recruiting in the countryside.

The Issue of Communist Merger. Communist leaders have made progress toward reunifying the CPI and CPM, but they will probably stop short of a formal merger. The recent Communist party congresses have expressed an urgent need for a reunified Communist party that is viewed by many political observers as essential to achieve Communist participation in a national government. Our conclusion is that the CPM at its congress in January 1982 moved to align itself more closely with the Soviet Union, thereby strengthening ties with its former rival, the pro-Soviet CPI. The CPM's sharp criticism of China and tilt toward the USSR removed a critical ideological obstruction to reunification with the CPI. The CPI congress in turn welcomed the CPM's condemnation of the United States and China but noted that differences with the CPM remained.

Formidable barriers still stand in the way of Communist unity. A major obstacle to merger is the issue of dealing with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a conservative, nationalist party with strong overtones of Hindu chauvinism. Unlike the CPM, the CPI until recently refused to include the BJP in any deliberations with other opposition parties. According to press accounts and US Embassy reporting, state units of the two Communist parties in May 1982 served together with the BJP on a committee of opposition parties to protest the installation of a Congress Party minister in Haryana. Differences remain, however, between the Communist parties over the BJP. At present the CPI sees the BJP as fundamentally anti-Communist, while CPM leaders view the BJP as a potential ally against the main opponent, Indira Gandhi. The CPM and CPI have operated independently for nearly 20 years, and central party leaders especially have a vested interest in maintaining the organizational status quo. Accordingly, Communist leaders may only be using the BJP issue as an excuse to avoid reunification.

Although we expect that the growing cooperation of India's Communist parties will stop short of actual merger, institutional arrangements have been set up to minimize friction. A coordinating committee formed in 1980 has made progress in smoothing out problems between the CPM and CPI. Over the past two years, furthermore, the Communist parties have worked together in coalition governments in West Bengal and Kerala. Last year CPM and CPI collaboration in municipal elections in Andhra Pradesh produced a number of council seats. The move of the CPM headquarters from Calcutta to New Delhi has helped to give the party a more national image, facilitating frequent contacts with the CPI leadership and government officials. 25X1

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The Communists, Gandhi, and the Central Government

In our view, Gandhi tolerates the Communist parties but is determined to confine them to regional—rather than national—opposition. The Indian Communists' success as a collective opposition in large part depends on how effectively the CPM and CPI can balance general support of Gandhi's "anti-imperialist" foreign policy against sharp regional opposition to most of her internal policies. Gandhi benefits from Communist party support for her stand on Afghanistan, Kampuchea, and Vietnam. She is also encouraged by Communist approval of her efforts to combat low-level

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insurgencies in the northeast. On the other hand, Gandhi clearly has little patience for Communist criticism of her domestic programs and her style of leadership. The Communists' contradictory approach to Gandhi blurs their public image, but it also has protected them to some degree from the Prime Minister's wrath.

Gandhi has generally been successful in containing the Communists as possible contenders for national power. She has no apparent designs to liquidate the Communist parties, but she is working hard to neutralize them as serious rivals. Since her reelection in 1980, Gandhi has taken care to minimize the presence of Communist sympathizers in her administration. The central government under certain conditions can impose direct administration in states, a prerogative Gandhi has exercised before against Communist governments in both West Bengal and Kerala. Gandhi brought down the Communist front government in Kerala in October 1981 by luring away a coalition partner of the Marxists and maneuvered unsuccessfully earlier this year to have President's Rule declared in CPM-run West Bengal. For the past two years she has launched a vigorous attack on Communism as an ideology incompatible with Indian democracy. In numerous campaign speeches during the state assembly elections last May she attacked the Communists' inability to assure public order in states where they governed and accused the Marxists of not providing basic human services.

Despite increasing strains in her relationship with the CPM and CPI, Gandhi will probably maintain a dialogue with the Communists as long as their gains are confined to West Bengal and Kerala. By occasionally consulting Communist leaders, Gandhi can anticipate serious problems with them. If she perceives that the Communists are making inroads in other states previously free of Marxist support, however, we expect her to take immediate steps to undermine their efforts.

If the Communists eventually succeed in gaining control of state governments outside their current bases of support, which we believe unlikely through the mid-1980s, the powers of those governments will be constrained by the constitution and by a potentially hostile central government. The national government has effective legislative, administrative, and financial controls over the states and, with cause, can dismiss elected state officials.[1] Because the Indian constitution embodies democratic ideals that are at variance with conventional Marxist goals, any attempt by a Communist state government to bring about a radical change in society would involve constitutional violations and subject the state government to dismissal.

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The overriding powers of the central government explain CPM efforts to press persistently for changes in federal-state relations that would increase the powers of state governments. We believe fears of even stronger executive powers in the central government are motivating the Communists to oppose bitterly proposals by some of Gandhi's supporters for a change from a parliamentary system of government to one led by a popularly elected president.

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The Communists and Soviet Influence

The Soviets can rely on prompt obedience to their directives by the CPI, but their overall ability to influence Gandhi through the Communist parties has declined since the early 1970s. Before 1977 the CPI and Congress Party maintained an amicable political relationship, with CPI support for the Prime Minister flowing directly from the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971. The CPI paid a political price for its association with Gandhi's emergency rule of the mid-1970s, however, and its credibility was almost destroyed in the elections of 1977, which swept Gandhi from power. The CPI thereafter adopted, with approval from Moscow, a line sharply critical of the former Prime Minister. According to an Indian Government consultant, the Soviets began to encourage CPI reconciliation with the more independent and more powerful CPM, which had increased its strength in parliament and won control of three state governments.

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[1] The authority to impose federal controls through President's Rule, the Essential Services Maintenance Act, and the National Security Act gives New Delhi firm control over weak or opposition state governments.

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Gandhi's reelection in 1980 surprised the Soviets, who had snubbed her during the years she was out of power and whose analysts had predicted that none of the "bourgeois" parties—including Gandhi's Congress Party—would win a stable and decisive majority. After her reelection Gandhi continued to support Soviet foreign policy but resented Soviet links with India's Communist parties.

The Soviet Union's interest in the dominant CPM probably stems from Moscow's belief that an eventual merger of the Communist parties—under Moscow's influence—will result in a significant strengthening of the Indian Communist movement. Alert to the shift in the balance of power within the Indian Communist movement and eager to take advantage of the CPM's seeming interest in better relations with the USSR, Moscow stepped up contacts with CPM officials.

Soviet diplomats in early 1980 conferred in Calcutta with West Bengal CPM leader Das Gupta, presumably to encourage unity talks. The following month leaders of both parties met at CPI headquarters for the first time since they split in 1964. Later in the year the Soviets invited a CPM official to Moscow for the Olympics.

In our judgment, Gandhi believes the Soviets have improved their relations with the CPM to the point that continued Soviet funding for the party at the current level—traditional payoffs to Communist labor unions and other front groups—could have an impact on future local district elections and in isolated parliamentary contests. 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1

We believe that the Soviet Union's interest in Gandhi is tactical, but its interest in the unification of the Communist movement in India is strategic. The Soviets probably believe that a strong Communist movement in India under Moscow's control will influence Indian foreign policy and help restrain Gandhi's efforts to liberalize the Indian economy. A Soviet-sponsored, reunified Communist party could also minimize Chinese influence in the CPM, a faction of which has always looked to Beijing for inspiration. We believe that the widening gulf between the Indian Communists and Gandhi displeases the Soviet Union, which probably fears that it may eventually be forced to choose between its special relationship with Gandhi and support for the CPI and CPM. 25X1 25X1 25X1

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Gandhi probably believes that Soviet obligations to her government and India's strategic importance to the USSR far outweigh the USSR's sense of responsibility to the Indian Communists, and that if forced to make a choice the Soviets would sacrifice the Marxists. Even so, Gandhi cannot be absolutely certain that Moscow would choose to support her at the expense of the Indian Communist parties because her grip on power is not as firm today as it was in 1980. As a result, she will probably avoid forcing Moscow to make a choice.

For its part, Moscow will attempt to maintain low-key support of the Indian Communists while cautioning them to avoid intense attacks on Gandhi. The Soviets undoubtedly recognize that an all-out Communist campaign against the Prime Minister would be detrimental to Moscow's interests and could destroy the foundations of domestic support built by the Indian Communist parties over the past five years.

Communist Prospects in the 1980s

We believe the Indian Communists have little hope of making meaningful political gains in the next few years. Gandhi's term as Prime Minister expires in early 1985, when the next general election is scheduled, and in the interim it is unlikely that the Communists will generate sufficient electoral support to make gains in either parliamentary byelections or state assembly contests. The Communists will probably win no more than 10 to 15 percent of the popular vote in most scheduled state elections over the next two to three years.

An inability to broaden their overall popular support will limit the national influence of the Communist parties. Communist strength seems to have peaked in West Bengal, where factionalism among the CPM-led Left Front partners may ultimately weaken the Marxist grip. Declining votes for both the CPM and CPI indicate that Communist support in Kerala may be on the wane. Communist electoral gains over the past five years in some rural areas of West Bengal and Kerala have been offset by the growing numbers of disillusioned tenants and landless laborers in these states who once supported the CPM, but who now believe, according to numerous press reports, that the Marxists have become the "establishment." Embassy and press reports note that militant Communist trade unions in Calcutta have been tamed by the ruling CPM government, which tries to serve the interests of both big business and the industrial proletariat. Leadership of trade unions in Bombay has been wrested from complacent Communist affiliates by independent trade unionists. 25X1

Within the next 10 years, age will force the retirement of senior officials in the Communist parties, and we believe that the national leadership will face increased difficulties directing party policy without the consent of powerful state leaders with their own electoral base. There is a strong regional bias among the state units of the Communist parties, particularly in the CPM. Although the Communist state leaders have generally supported the national leadership's policies, albeit unenthusiastically, they tend to view themselves as Bengalis or Malayalis first and Communists second. We believe CPM state leaders see little advantage in following the central leadership, which has a national vision of the party but only limited experience in strengthening its grass-roots support. Unless younger regional leaders of the CPI and CPM are integrated into the Communist parties' national policymaking committees, the senior leadership will remain isolated from the rank and file. Moreover, the regionalism of the CPM in West Bengal and elsewhere will hinder the central leadership's efforts to challenge seriously the Congress Party on a national level. 25X1 25X1 25X1

The CPI and CPM will in all likelihood experiment further with, but not wholeheartedly embrace, coalition politics. The Communists may eventually be represented in additional state coalition governments, but their prospects are poor for strengthening their national position through that tactic. Many skeptics in the Communist parties believe that bourgeois parties cannot be trusted. The fall of the CPM-led government in Kerala in October 1981 after the defection of a non-Communist party from the coalition supports such a view. Moreover, anti-Communist elements appear to predominate in the non-Communist opposition parties. In our view, Communist and non-Communist party cooperation will be largely limited to local rather than national electoral battles. 25X1

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The Communists probably anticipate that, after Gandhi leaves office, the growing political awareness of millions in the lower classes—who are voting in greater numbers and whose loyalties have yet to be determined—will work in their favor. We believe that CPI and CPM cooperation and Communist attempts to arrange alliances with non-Communist parties will increase the possibility of an eventual replacement of Gandhi's ruling Congress Party by a national coalition of non-Communist opposition parties with a small Communist representation. Even without a formal merger, Communist efforts to achieve common goals will deprive Gandhi of the ability to play one group against the other and give the Communists a credibility they have so far lacked.

We believe Moscow has encouraged the Communist parties to unite in order to increase the Soviet Union's leverage with Gandhi as well as to prepare the CPI and CPM for the post-Gandhi era. Moscow's willingness to permit the Communists to remain opposed to Gandhi's domestic policies testifies, in our view, to the Kremlin's strategy of enduring short-term problems with Gandhi in order to enhance their influence over the longer term.

the Soviets probably are not convinced that Indian Communists can lead a national government, and they have publicly courted Gandhi's son and heir, Rajiv, with an eye to the future.

Implications for the United States

Indian Communist propaganda against US policy in South Asia and the Indian Ocean has little apparent effect on Gandhi's government or on Indian public opinion. Periodic Communist statements and demonstrations at US Consulates in India, however, provide a backdrop against which Gandhi's pro-Soviet positions must appear moderate and balanced to some countries in the Nonalignment Movement and to most segments of the Indian public. The Indian Communists attack US "imperialism" routinely at the same time as they support Soviet foreign policy objectives. The Communist parties do not appear to be attracting voters by supporting the Soviet Union. Other than a small number of middle class intellectuals and bureaucrats, the Indian public generally ignores nuances of foreign policy.

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The Communists have no groundswell of anti-US feeling in India to use against the Prime Minister. The Indian intelligentsia and the large middle class generally share some Western values, and Indian parliamentary democracy has its roots in the Western political tradition. Public opinion surveys consistently show that the United States is widely admired by the Indian public.

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It appears to us that Gandhi's tilt toward Soviet foreign policy positions appeases somewhat her anti-American Communist opposition.

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Nevertheless, we believe that continued Moscow-backed Communist opposition to Gandhi is a source of friction between the Soviets and the Prime Minister that serves US interests in the subcontinent. At a time when disciplinary and organizational problems in her Congress Party are increasing and the intended succession of her son Rajiv is still in doubt, Gandhi seems to be particularly sensitive to Soviet meddling in Indian internal affairs. As long as Gandhi believes she cannot trust Soviet policy toward her government, she will be more likely to keep her options open for greater cooperation with the West.

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Appendix

The Evolution of Indian Communism

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India's organized Communist movement—one of the first outside the Soviet Union—began with the formation of the Communist Party of India (CPI) in early 1921. The Communists struggled through uncertain years characterized by organizational difficulties and repression by Anglo-Indian authorities. In 1935 Indian Communists adopted the Communist International policy of cooperation with legal, liberal, and non-Communist organizations while seeking to infiltrate them in order to gain control. By espousing an anti-imperialist line the Communists gained influence in the trade union movement and in the Indian National Congress. The CPI acquired legal status as a political party in 1942.

Communist strategy in India has varied considerably over the years. Germany's attack on the Soviet Union during World War II resulted in open support by Indian Communists for the British war effort at the same time the nationalist movement opposed the war effort in India. The subsequent imprisonment of many Congress Party leaders gave the Communists greater latitude in building their organization and cadres, but it also put them out of the political mainstream. After India's independence in 1947, the Communists with Soviet support encouraged violent revolution but were able to mount a short-lived rebellion only in what is now Andhra Pradesh. By 1951 this effort had clearly failed, and the party fell back on its stronghold in the labor unions in urban areas.

Hardline Communists were unreconciled to the shift to parliamentary tactics in the early 1950s, but the value of the change appeared to be proven in the elections of 1957. The Communists gained control of the newly constituted state of Kerala, the first time that Communists had come to power by popular ballot anywhere in the world. The subsequent collapse of the Communist Kerala government in 1959 rekindled the intraparty dispute between the moderates and the militants. Party activists sympathetic to Maoist militancy argued that the Congress Party would never permit a peaceful Communist takeover and that the parliamentary approach was dulling the Communists' capacity for more forceful action. Party moderates were loyal to Moscow, which was attempting to cement close ties with the Congress Party–dominated government. The Chinese attack on India in 1962 further embittered the quarrel, when the moderates strongly backed the Indian Government and many militants were arrested.

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The final split came in 1964 when the militants, with about half of the membership of the CPI, broke from the parent organization to form the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM). The CPM controlled the movement in West Bengal and Kerala, the two states where the united party's organization and leadership had been the strongest. The CPI was generally stronger in other regions of India.

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The fissure in the Indian Communist Party in 1964 clearly revealed wide differences among the party members. Besides accusing the CPI of revisionism and failure to become a truly revolutionary party, the CPM refused to condemn the Chinese Communist Party despite India's bitter border war with China in 1962—and was consequently but inaccurately dubbed pro-Chinese. The two Communist parties also had conflicting interpretations of the proper structure of a Communist party. The CPI advocated imposition of a socialist state through a cadre of indoctrinated "wise men;" the CPM, on the other hand, wanted to replace bourgeois/landlord rule with a "people's democracy" built from below on the basis of mass struggle against the existing ruling forces in India. The split of 1964 set back the Communist movement because it generated deep personal animosities in the Communist leadership, dissipated the energies of the collective membership, and led to a decline in the cadre's morale.

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The degree of electoral cooperation and competition between the two major Communist parties in the 1960s varied widely from state to state. The CPI

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fared slightly better in parliament than the CPM, whereas in state contests the CPM had the edge. CPM victories in Kerala and West Bengal were characterized by strong anti-Gandhi campaigns and gave the party a far more decisive role in those states than the CPI had elsewhere. The CPI joined in anti-Congress coalitions in the state governments wherever possible. Following the failure of most coalitions, the CPI reverted to its earlier policy of cooperation with the Congress Party. This posture heightened the antipathy between the CPI and CPM.

The CPI's position in Indian politics during the 1970s was weakened by Gandhi's refusal to enter into national election agreements that would place her in debt to the CPI. Other than during the period of emergency rule in 1975-77, Gandhi's overwhelming control of parliament and almost all state assemblies has rendered CPI support far less necessary than in previous years when her position was more vulnerable. The CPI's partial alliance with the Congress Party in the 1970s limited its agitational capability and revolutionary potential.

In the parliamentary elections of 1977 that brought the Janata coalition to power, the CPM emerged as the more vital of the two major Communist parties. The CPM fought the election as a Janata ally and won the majority of the parliamentary seats in West Bengal and Tripura and a number of constituencies in Kerala and Maharashtra. In contrast the CPI paid a heavy price for having fought the election in alliance with Gandhi's party. At a party congress in 1978 the CPI acknowledged its support of Gandhi had been wrong and resolved to seek tactical unity with the CPM. The CPM followed suit with a resolution at its congress making unity with the CPI a chief goal. In 1980 the Communist parties committed themselves to embrace all left, democratic, and progressive elements, including those that could be found in the bourgeois political parties.

Communist and leftist "unity," however, is still an elusive goal. There appears to be considerable disagreement between national and state Communist leaders regarding which leftist and bourgeois parties should be included in electoral alliances against the ruling Congress Party.

CPM policy over the years has been above all pragmatic, influenced more by the rapidly changing Indian political situation than by dogmatic ideological considerations. The party has always recruited selectively in order to maintain strict organizational control. From its inception, the CPM has been burdened with severe intraparty friction over the use of parliamentary versus revolutionary methods. Most of the revolutionary extremists either have been purged or have pulled out of the party to form parallel units in some of the states. 25X1 25X1

In the late 1960s revolution-minded defectors from the CPM announced the formation of another Indian Communist party, the Communist Party of India-Marxist-Leninist (CPI–ML). CPI–ML members are known as "Naxalites," a name derived from a region in West Bengal where they led an abortive guerrilla and terrorist uprising in 1967. The CPI–ML castigates both of the older Indian Communist parties for trying to achieve power within India's constitutional system. It calls for Maoist, revolutionary guerrilla activities. The party favors stirring up peasant and tribal revolts rather than trouble in the cities and permits participation in mass movements only for the purpose of sustaining tension and recruiting new members. 25X1 25X1 25X1

In our view, ideological and organizational differences are so deep among Naxalite factions that no agreement can be reached on any concerted course of action. 25X1

Naxalites do not play a significant political role in India now, and we believe they will remain weak. Their almost unhesitating resort to violence makes them a public order problem that has hurt the major Communist parties more than it has popularized the 25X1 25X1

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Communist cause. The Naxalites have embarrassed the CPM-led government of West Bengal with periodic murders in the countryside, and they contributed to the downfall of the CPM coalition government in Kerala in October 1981, which was charged with inability to control political violence by both the extreme left and right.

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